

LC 1972 Interstate Compact Licensure
Legislative Testimony
Susan Raph

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 2/16/07
HB 1624

Dear Chairman Rice and Committee Members:

My name is Susan Raph. I apologize for being unavailable for today's hearing. I thank you for the opportunity to provide insight and support of the Board of Nursing's bill to implement Interstate Compact Licensure for nurses in Montana.

My support for interstate compact licensure emanates from over twenty five (25) years of varied nursing practice. I have worked in critical care, rural and rural administration, public and school health, and currently am employed by Montana State University College of Nursing to administer and educate the next generation of nurses. I am the Montana Board of Nursing President.

Throughout my professional career I have not personally needed to apply for licensure in another state. I have, however, come to understand through my practice and my service to the Board of Nursing, that there are nurses who must expend hundreds of dollars and countless hours applying for multiple licenses required for their jobs. Passage of the interstate compact licensure bill will allow nurses in Montana the opportunity to work with patients in other compact states without this unnecessary effort.

Nursing practice has evolved beyond the bedside. Today's nurse has become the coordinator and navigator of patient care both in the acute setting and well beyond the walls of the hospital. We have become a global society, and patients travel great distances for healthcare. It is not uncommon for a nurse to work with patients not only outside the community, but frequently out of state or even from across the country. The newer nursing areas of case management and tele-nursing have witnessed incredible growth over the last decade. This type of practice requires the nurse to obtain licensure in each of the states with which she might interface in the course of day to day individual patient interaction. The interstate compact licensure bill will allow nurses in Montana the opportunity for mutual recognition of their initial licensure much like that of a driver's license.

One of the many other benefits derived from interstate compact licensure is the resultant increase in the ability of the Montana Board to Nursing to ensure safe nursing practice. The compact will reduce a nurse's ability to move to another state or to our state to avoid a disciplinary action. Montana patients deserve safe nursing care and the compact will improve access to safe licensed nurses in an era of nursing shortage.

As Board President, I am confident that this bill will support and enhance the work and goals of the Board of Nursing. I am also confident that the implementation of the compact bill will be firmly supported by the Department of Labor and Industry. My experience with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, a key partner in compact implementation, has also been extremely positive. Through the wisdom of the many states surrounding Montana that use the compact, we will utilize lessons learned to provide an organized and timely implementation process for Montana.

In closing, I ask that you vote to pass this bill through committee without substantive change so that Montana can benefit from improved and responsive regulation that allows for the rapid changes that are the hallmark of healthcare. This bill will assist the Board of Nursing in fulfilling its statutory directive of protecting the welfare and safety of the public.

This is a win-win bill....it is good for Montana patients and it is good for Montana nurses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Raph MN, RN".

Susan Raph, MN, RN, CNAA, BC
Montana Board of Nursing President